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REPORT

OF THE

Educational Commission

APPOINTED BY THE

KANSAS STATE TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION.

January, 1911.



STATE PRINTING OFFICE,
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4673

Kansas Educational Commission.

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| E. T. FAIRCHILD, Chairman ex-officio | Topeka. |
| State Superintendent Public Instruction. | |
| Superintendent M. E. PEARSON | Kansas City. |
| Superintendent A. F. SENTER | Great Bend. |
| Principal C. A. WAGNER | Emporia. |
| Principal S. M. NEES | Independence. |
| County Superintendent LEE HARRISON | Wellington. |

Report.

Issued by E. T. Fairchild, State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The Educational Commission appointed by the State Teachers' Association in October, 1910 begs leave to submit the following report:

STATE AID FOR WEAK SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

1. It is the duty of the state to see that every child within its borders has the opportunity to secure a good education. Children in the poorest section of the state have as much right to an education at hands of the state as one living in the richest portion. Every child, whatever his condition as to location, is entitled to a "square deal."

2. Last year there were 2667 school districts out of 7859 which maintained a school term of only six months or less.

3. The last legislature appropriated about \$2,264,059.00 for the maintenance of the state educational institutions, the attendance of which was 8004 for the year 1910. Liberal appropriations for these splendid institutions is to be commended, but surely there should be some consideration on the part of this great commonwealth of the 23,418 boys and girls who, by force of circumstances are compelled to live in districts unable to maintain school for longer period than from three to six months.

4. One of the crying needs in our state is that of better qualified teachers for the country schools. Little encouragement for better preparation is found in the probability of employment for only three to six months. The fixing of a minimum term of sufficient length will go a long way toward improving these conditions.

5. State aid for weak districts and minimum terms is not a new departure in school matters. Twelve states of the Union have made provision for a minimum term of seven months or more. Thirteen states make district appropriations for the aid of the public schools. Every state except eight render state aid in some form to their public schools. Kansas with her reputation for loyalty to whatever benefits her citizens can not afford to remain behind in educational progress.

FREE HIGH-SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR ALL.

Twenty-three counties of Kansas have county high schools in which tuition is free throughout the county. Under the Barnes law thirty-seven other counties have high schools free to all pupils within the county, thus making a total of sixty counties in all in which the right of the child to a free high-school education is recognized. There still remain forty-five counties which, as far as the high school is concerned, are operating under the tuition system of the days of our forefathers. As regards these forty-five counties, Kansas is behind the states laying claim to good school systems.

This condition ought no longer to exist. It is the duty of the state to provide that every child shall have an opportunity to secure an adequate education free. The value of a high school education is as generally recognized to-day as was the value of a complete elementary education a generation or so ago. Tuition acts as a barrier between the child and a high-school education at the moment when the strongest incentives are needed. It is enough for the parent to bear the other expenses of an education without the added burden of tuition. Because of this barrier the community and state lose the best services of many bright, but poor boys and girls, because the avenues to opportunity are closed against them. Let us in Kansas be true to our instincts and traditions and give an equal chance educationally to all our boys and girls and not merely to the favored few. Especially let us give country children an equal chance with their city cousins. While we delay many capable young people are being dwarfed intellectually, and immediate help is imperative.

Lack of action in most cases thus far has been due to objections to the nature of the existing laws for extending free high-school privileges rather than to an unwillingness to perform a belated, just and patriotic duty towards our future citizens by giving a fair and equal chance to all. Until the remaining counties are ready to adopt one or the other of the free high school laws now on our statute books, immediate relief should be given them through some measure that will appeal to all as being just and fair in all respects.

The proposed law provides that a general tax should be levied on the portion of the county having no high school. That tax will be merely enough to pay the actual cost of furnishing

high school education to all persons from that territory attending high school. According to the best legal advice the plan is unquestionably constitutional. An additional feature is that of providing that districts maintaining a high school course less than four years in length should pay the tuition of their pupils upon completion of that course in high schools having a four-year course.

By this plan corporate property, such as railroads, would pay its full share toward education. That it does not do so now is evident from a glance at the very low school levies in districts in which such corporate property happens to exist. Each person can form some estimate as to how small the amount would be for the average individual by inquiring into the amount of high-school tuition that is now paid in his county. While that amount would be almost negligible the radical improvement to our school system and the benefit to our people would be very great.

CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS.

Conditions.

"As is the teacher so is the school." If the sentiment expressed in this quotation is a true one, the improvement of our rural schools depends to no little extent upon the qualifications we require for the certification of our teachers.

In the rural schools of Kansas, many teachers are young, inexperienced and poorly prepared. Forty-five per cent of all the rural school teachers have no education beyond the eighth grade, while 65 per cent of them do not have educational qualifications equivalent to high-school graduation. Further, 55 per cent of all county certificates are of the lowest grade.

The requirements for teachers' certificates are gradually being strengthened in other states and Kansas should be among those states that are manifesting this progressive spirit.

The course taken by Indiana will serve to illustrate. The law which went into effect two years ago requires each applicant to be a graduate of a four-year high-school course, and, in addition, to have had at least twelve weeks of normal training.

New York has gone even so far as to require all certificates issued after April 1, 1907, to be of state wide application, and requiring about the same educational qualifications that Kansas demands for the different kinds of state certificates. Illi-

mois and Iowa have also made some fundamental readjustments though not going quite so far in their changes as the older state of New York has done. They all serve to illustrate the general tendency to place our children under the care of persons who have made special preparation for the duties and responsibilities of teachers.

PROPOSED CHANGES.

We desire therefore to make the following recommendations:

Requirements, Third-grade Certificate.

Age.—Eighteen years.

Term.—One year.

Number.—Not more than two if applicant has taught five months.

Examination.—In all those subjects required by law to be taught in the public schools; and such other subjects as the State Board of Education may prescribe.

Not renewable.

Requirements, Second-grade Certificate.

Age.—Nineteen years.

Term.—Two years.

Experience.—Seven months.

Examination.—Same provisions as above.

Requirements, First-grade Certificate.

Age.—Twenty-one years.

Experience.—Twenty-one months.

Examinations.—Same provisions as above.

Renewable on condition that the holder attends County Normal Institute, or takes six weeks professional training in some approved school, and performs such professional work as the State Board of Education shall direct.

SPECIAL PROVISIONS.

A holder of an unexpired second-grade certificate, who has taught twenty-one months, may retain any grade of ninety per cent, or over, upon his second grade to apply upon the requirements for a first grade certificate. Professional certificates now in force will retain their renewal privileges but no more professional certificates will be issued.

The commission recommends that after 1913 no person be granted a certificate who has not completed at least one year of work in an accredited high school or its equivalent, and after 1915 two years' high school work or its equivalent shall

be required, and after 1917 four years' high school work or its equivalent; exception being made in the case of any one who has taught at least six months before 1912.

A FEW REASONS FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGES.

The minimum age limit should be eighteen years. Higher qualifications are demanded of teachers. More time should therefore be given in which to obtain them. Raising the age limit encourages extended preparation. A low age limit is a premium upon incomplete preparation.

The commission believes that before professional progress is possible, the fundamentals of an education should be acquired. Hence the provision is made that the minimum amount of education for the rural school teacher should be equivalent to that of high-school graduation. City boards of education are insisting upon college graduates with some professional work as teachers in high schools. Why should not district boards have the right to insist upon properly qualified teachers for the rural schools? The change proposed is a gradual one and it is improbable that a shortage of teachers would occur. Certain jurisdiction is to be given to the State Board of Education to provide against any possible shortage of teachers. On the other hand, the premium placed upon special preparation for the work of teaching, and the wider field thrown open to thoroughly qualified teachers, will cause a larger number of bright and ambitious young people to choose the work of teaching. Also, to prevent injustice to teachers who are already successfully engaged in the work of teaching, exceptions are made.

The excellent results of manual training and the teaching of home economics, which includes domestic science and domestic art, in our city schools clearly indicate the desirability of the extension of these and kindred lines of work. Kansas is essentially an agricultural state. Her wealth and prosperity depend upon the successful tilling of the soil and the intelligent development of the farm activities. The commission therefore recommends the provision that the State Board of Education may prescribe additional subjects.

Another clause provides for the renewal of the first grade certificate on condition of successful teaching and professional progress. At its best, a written examination is a very imperfect means of testing the ability of any applicant to teach

school, and it is in no way a test of possible teaching skill or adaptability to the work of a teacher. One of the first steps in the direction of developing a trained teaching force for a state is to lay less stress upon examinations and to place the main emphasis upon professional training and successful experience.

BOARDS OF EDUCATION OF CITIES OF THE FIRST AND SECOND CLASS.

Some legislation is absolutely necessary, as under the commission form elections are held only on odd-numbered years and the general election law for nominations and elections of boards of education is not applicable.

There is a conviction on the part of a large number of cities that the number of members should be reduced to six, making the law uniform for all first- and second-class cities. At present there are boards of education of six, eight, ten and twelve members.

A law providing for a uniform number of six members, nominated and elected at large for a term of four years, three to be elected each odd-numbered year at the general city election, is proposed and highly recommended. It is also recommended that this law provide for the present members who have unexpired terms to serve jointly with the newly elected members until the expiration of their term.

The argument in favor of such recommendation is not alone that of a uniform manner of selection, but it is believed that a body of not more than six members is likely to be a more effective agency in administering the school affairs of a community than a larger number could possibly be. It is also felt that the nomination and election would insure a broader outlook in regard to the schools and would tend to eliminate the individual interests which frequently are pressed at the expense of the community as a whole. Experience seems to demonstrate that a nomination and election by all the people would secure a better and more capable class of men.

A LARGER UNIT OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATION.

This committee has given careful consideration to the question of a larger unit of organization for the schools of Kansas and is fully convinced that the enactment of a law making the county the basis of organization would be highly beneficial to the cause of general education.

Three units of organization are in use in the various states of the Union; the district, the township, and the county. More than half of the states are organized on a district basis. The New England states, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and a few other states have adopted the township system. The Southern states use the county plan. Iowa and South Dakota have recently undertaken the adoption of the county unit. Committees on the codification of school laws in several other states have recommended its adoption. Many school men and others who are giving their attention to the practical working of school affairs and to the consideration of plans for the improvement of the schools so as to meet the needs of the times are urging the adoption of the county as the unit of organization. Wherever this plan has been given a trial, the results have been highly satisfactory.

The following are a few of the reasons for the superiority of the county unit over the district system:

1. It is less expensive. This has been true in most places where it has been tried. In the comparatively few instances in which the cost of schools has been increased, the superior facilities afforded have more than counterbalanced the additional outlay.

2. It equalizes taxes levied for school purposes. In one county in Kansas, the valuation of a certain school district is only \$63,000; of another district \$3,521,000. The tax levied in the first district is seven mills; in the second, no tax was required this year. In two other wealthy districts, the levy was only four-tenths of a mill. Other counties in the state show similar conditions. Certainly no valid reason can be given why one man should pay fifteen or twenty times as much for the education of his children as another, equally wealthy, should pay for the same privilege. Under the county system, railroad and other corporation taxes would be more widely distributed and present conditions greatly improved.

3. It insures equality of school provisions as to school houses, apparatus, and other school equipment, thus making greater uniformity of attainment possible.

4. It secures for teachers greater permanency of position. Under the district system, the teacher often loses her position on account of petty neighborhood quarrels. Such conditions would be less likely to affect the school under county organiza-

tion and greater efficiency would be a natural result of the longer tenure of office of teachers.

5. The county system reduces the number of schools and increases the number of pupils in attendance at each, thus making possible better grading and classification and adding the inspiration of numbers.

6. It is a means, possibly the only one, of obtaining that closer supervision necessary to bring the common schools to the highest degree of efficiency. The single visit paid by the County Superintendent to the district school annually can accomplish but little in the way of efficient supervision. The county system renders possible the appointment of assistant superintendents or supervisors who can visit the schools often enough to be of some real service to them.

7. It eliminates all district boundary disputes, having a decided advantage in this respect over both district and township systems.

8. It makes consolidation of schools easy and practicable. The greater efficiency of consolidated schools, because of their better buildings, better equipment, more competent teachers, more thorough supervision, more careful grading and classification is admitted by all educators and by all patrons familiar with them. A carefully worked out plan of consolidation for the country schools of our state would be of inestimable value to the cause of education.

This Committee is in favor of immediate steps being taken to establish the county system in the State of Kansas. Many reasons can be added to the above for its adoption. We believe that this would be a great forward movement for the common schools and would enable them to meet the growing needs of the children of the state, which, under present conditions, they are unable to do.

We commend this measure to your favorable consideration, believing that it will appeal to every lover of progress in education as being worthy of enactment into law.

QUALIFICATIONS OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT.

During the last ten years each succeeding state legislature has placed added responsibilities and duties on the office of county superintendent, making it one of the most important offices in the county. It seems consistent, therefore that a

corresponding raise in qualifications for county superintendent be made.

It seems wise to recommend a change in the present law, so as to prohibit any person from holding the office who was not actively engaged in school work at least four of the twelve months prior to his nomination.

After the year 1914 only persons who are holding a state certificate, a diploma from an accredited college, or a special superintendent's certificate, hereinafter described, shall be eligible to the office of county superintendent.

We realize that many of the most efficient superintendents of our state do not possess the above-named qualification, and that perhaps in some counties in Kansas persons having such qualifications might not always be available for the office; yet in order that competent superintendents may be secured for every county, the State Board of Education should be empowered to grant a special superintendent's certificate to persons of excellent executive ability, strong supervisory powers and good scholarship, upon the presentation of such evidence as the board may prescribe and in such manner as it may direct.

The above recommendations are from the report of the legislative committee of 1909.

CLERKS FOR COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

The Educational Commission of 1908, appointed by Governor Hoch, reported on this subject, in part, as follows: "The county superintendent finds his broadest and most helpful field of operation in the actual supervision of school work. To go out in the schools of his county and spend, not alone an hour, but half a day, or even a whole day, in careful observation, in the giving of timely advice, and of assisting the teacher to solve the problems that confront her, is of infinitely more value than the routine work of the office itself.

"Perhaps the chief advantage of city and graded schools lies in the closer supervision—in the opportunity that comes to the superintendent for daily visits to the various schools, and because of close and frequent inspection he is able to make.

"In this state there are twenty county superintendents who have more than 75 and less than 100 teachers under his supervision, and fifty-four counties in which there are more than 100 teachers in the rural schools.

“To visit and observe the work of all the schools, correcting any deficiencies that may exist; to encourage the beginners in teaching; to hear and adjust the difficulties that arise in many school districts; to attend the educational meetings and teachers’ associations which the law requires, and to keep the office open each Saturday, together with the mass of correspondence that is sure to accumulate, is a task greater than can be properly performed by any one county superintendent.

“Any law that makes possible the discharge of the higher and real duties of the superintendent—namely, close, intelligent and helpful supervision—will be of greatest value to our rural schools.”

The Educational Commission appointed by the president of the State Teachers’ Association in 1909 recommend that there be “some provision in law for employing and paying an assistant in the office of county superintendent.”

In accordance with the above recommendations, we earnestly petition the legislature of 1911 to enact a law providing that the county commissioners of the several counties may allow annually the following sums, or as much thereof as they may deem necessary, for clerk hire in the office of county superintendent:

In counties employing 75 teachers, \$300; 100 teachers, \$400; 200 teachers, \$600.

SALARY OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS.

Conditions in Kansas.

The laws regulating the salary of county superintendents have become unjust in operation in many cases, inasmuch as the conditions have changed materially in every county of the state since the adoption of the present plan. In 1881 the present plan of basing the salary upon certain school population was inaugurated, slight changes occurring in 1897, 1899, 1901, 1905, etc.

At that time also a limit was placed upon certain counties. One county (Saline) has a population of 3264 school children and employs 102 school teachers, and pays \$1200, while another (Harvey) has a population of 3695 and employs 99 teachers, and pays but \$1000. Still another (Butler) has a population of 6200 and employs 206 teachers, and pays \$1200 per year. The addition of one teacher in Harvey county will make an addition of \$200 in the superintendent’s salary.

It is evident from the point of work to be done that if the first is paid justly the other two are treated unjustly.

Inequalities.

The following schedule furnishes some striking comparisons:

| County. | School population. | No. teachers. | Salary. |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|---------|
| Saline | 3,264 | 102 | \$1,200 |
| Harvey | 3,595 | 99 | 1,000 |
| Sumner | 6,402 | 227 | 1,200 |
| Morton | 320 | 15 | 540 |
| Hodgeman | 935 | 43 | 540 |

The above table is taken from reports of 1910.

In some western counties it is necessary under the present laws for the county superintendent to teach in some of the schools of the county so as to make enough money in addition to the salary as superintendent to provide living wages.

In many instances the superintendent has teachers under him receiving salaries higher than his own salary.

County Superintendents' Salaries.

In other states the county superintendent's salary is out of all proportions when compared with Kansas. In nearly every state county superintendents are allowed traveling expenses and mileage in addition to salary.

Below are some figures that should be compared with Kansas:

| State. | Minimum. | Maximum. |
|---|----------|----------|
| Kansas | \$540 | \$1,200 |
| Illinois | 1,250 | 7,500 |
| Colorado | 1,000 | 2,800 |
| Iowa | 1,250 | 1,500 |
| Oregon | 800 | 1,500 |
| North Dakota | 1,000 | 2,000 |
| Pennsylvania | 1,000 | 3,500 |
| Oklahoma | 600 | 1,600 |
| Minnesota, not less than \$10 per teacher.... | | 1,800 |
| Indiana, \$4.50 per day | | 2,000 |

ARGUMENT.

The plan to base the salary upon population and number of teachers is a wise provision, and if adjusted by succeeding legislatures will work no hardship upon anyone. However, it seems that some scheme might be adopted that would readily adjust itself to the changing needs of the changing conditions in the various counties. If the present plan is continued it should be modified so as to raise the maximum in the large

counties and allow an addition on a smaller number of teachers in the small counties.

It will be noticed that in the proposed schedule every county in the state of Kansas may have the privilege of paying \$800. In the more thinly populated parts of the state counties may pay such part of the \$800 as may be required to procure suitable persons to supervise their schools.

It will be observed further, that under the proposed changes in the law the adjustment in the schedule of salaries yields more readily to the changes in the several counties. This change, if accomplished, will be the first material change in any county in thirty years.

The fact should be borne in mind that every legislature since 1881 has added duties and responsibilities upon the county superintendent, making him at present the most far-reaching influence in the whole educational system in the state. This being true, the salary should be such as to attract the strongest men in the profession to the office of county superintendent, which it does not do at the present time.



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